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Narrator: Jess Hawley, Jr.

OH Number: #1042

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Jess Hawley
PO 1617 Boise, Id.
11/14/89

(Jess Hawley, Jr.)

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PUBLIC TELEVISION FOR IDAHO AND EASTERN OREGON

July 2, 1990

Linda Morton-Keithley
Oral Historian
Oral History
210 Main Street
Boise, ID 83702

Dear Ms. Morton-Keithley:

We are pleased to donate the audio cassettes which were made from videotaped interviews from Idaho Public Television's "Proceeding On Through A Beautiful Country: A History of Idaho." We feel these tapes will help ensure that an important part of Idaho's history will be preserved.

This letter will grant you any rights to these audio recordings which Idaho Public Television may possess.

Sincerely,

Lynn G. Allen
Station Manager

LGA/kb

TAPE SUMMARY

NARRATOR: Jess Hawley, Jr.
INTERVIEWER: Barbara Pulling
DATE: November 14, 1989
LOCATION: Boise
PROJECT: IEPBS/History of Idaho Tape #106

Manuscript

Page	Summary
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SIDE 1

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Senator Borah was a great friend of Hawley's grandfather and father; his father was Borah's attorney for some 20 years; Hawley met Borah when he was a young boy, then again when he was attending Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.; recalls a Thanksgiving Day dinner at the Borah home in 1939--there were canaries flying about the apartment and Borah spoke about the Japanese, that the U.S. should be more friendly toward the Japanese |
| 2 | Recalls Borah as a austere person but friendly, a gentleman; was a great orator but his conversational tone was friendly; had a baritone voice and commanding appearance; didn't sponsor any major pieces of legislation but was a great supporter or opponent of legislation sponsored by others; was against the Versailles treaty, League of Nations, much of the New Deal |
| 3 | Borah was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, although he didn't travel outside of the U.S.; he was intelligent, articulate, studied a great deal, had many contacts, was well known around the world; when Hawley was in Washington, D.C., Idaho was known for two things--potatoes and Senator Borah |
| 5 | One criticism of Borah was that he didn't spend much time in Idaho; Borah made an unsuccessful run for the presidency; Hawley admired Borah's tenacity in always voting the way he felt was right, regardless of the consequences; he had enormous ambition and self-confidence |
| 7 | Borah was somewhat of a loner, was articulate, cultivated a western appearance--broad-brimmed hat, longer hair, bow tie; his key to success when orating was his magnificent voice, extensive research and good presentation; he had been a trial lawyer |
| 8 | Borah went along with some of President Roosevelt's New Deal legislation but |

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not all of it; could be very stubborn; has sometimes been called the "great dissenter"; was an isolationist, nationalist, would probably have to moderate his views if he were alive today; was a strict constructionalist of the Constitution

11 Borah was a Republican with some Democratic leanings, not a strong partisan; was very independent, loved the Idaho outdoors; was not an outgoing person and didn't engage in idle conversation, but still was easy to talk with; Hawley believes Borah could have adapted to today's world of politics

13 END OF SIDE 1

SIDE 2

13 Hawley speculates about how Borah would feel about issues today--right of privacy, abortion

14 END OF SIDE 2; END OF INTERVIEW

NARRATOR: Jess Hawley, Jr.

INTERVIEWER: Barbara Pulling

DATE: November 14, 1989

LOCATION: Boise

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SIDE 1

Q: How did you get to know Senator Borah?

JH: Well of course, the Senator was a very great friend of my grandfather's and my father's, and my father was his personal attorney for perhaps 20 years, latter part of his life, and was quite close to the Senator. And I met the Senator when I was a young boy and I don't have very vivid recollection of my meeting him, but I know I did meet him. And then when I went to law school in Georgetown in Washington D.C., why, I had occasion to meet the Senator on several occasions.

Q: Which ones stand out most in your memory?

JH: Well I think the most vivid recollection is in 1939 when I was invited on Thanksgiving Day to his apartment on Connecticut Avenue for a Thanksgiving dinner, at which a number of Idaho people were present, including some people from his office and Joe Burge from Hagerman, Idaho. And we had dinner in his lovely apartment with Mary Borah, and I do recall thinking that, for a while there, that I was in an aviary because there were half a dozen or more canaries that just flew through the room and was quite unusual. And I do recall at that meeting also, at that dinner, that the Senator discoursed at length about the Japanese. He didn't seem too concerned about the expansionist plans of the Japanese in the Far East but he talked to us about the fact that our relations with Japan weren't friendly enough, that they

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wanted to be friends of ours, and were dying to be friends of ours and that we should cultivate a more friendly attitude to the Japanese. The Senator died in December of that year I think, and the following year was Pearl Harbor where the Japanese displayed their friendship to us.

Q: In that somewhat informal social setting, how did Senator Borah conduct himself?
Much like he would on the floor of the Senate, or?

JH: Well, he was rather an austere person, and of course I was in awe of him, and he had that enormous national stature, and he was very friendly, however, and because of the relationship with my family, he had gone out of his way to ask me to dinner. And he was a perfect gentleman, and his wife was a lovely person.

Q: When he did his discourse, was that much like when he'd give a speech?

JH: No, he spoke in a conversational tone. He didn't--he was probably the greatest orator of his time, certainly the greatest orator in the United States Senate during his tenure, but he spoke to us in a soft, confidential, conversational tone. He didn't orate.

Q: But you did have a chance to hear him orate?

JH: Yes.

Q: How would you describe that?

JH: Well, he was extremely articulate. He had a marvelous baritone voice. He had a commanding appearance and he looked and spoke like a senator, and I was certainly impressed as a young man with his performance on the floor of the Senate on the one occasion I had to observe him.

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Q: He has been described by, I guess you could call them some critics, that he was a spirales leader. A great orator, but not necessarily a lot of action. How would you react to that?

JH: I wouldn't--I don't really--I don't really think that that's a fair assessment. I do know that he had the reputation that he hadn't espoused any major piece of legislation during his term as a United States Senator, but he was a powerful orator and he had great respect and great influence in the United States Senate.

Q: Do you think that was a disappointment to him, or was that fine by him, to be the orator of the Senate and not necessarily the one who came up with the big pieces of legislation?

JH: Well he certainly spiked a lot of major legislation. Of course he fought the Versailles treaty and had stated that it had sown the seeds of war and he was certainly prophetic in that. He fought the Wilson's appeal to get us into the League of Nations. He fought any number of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation and was very successful in spiking or killing that legislation. So I don't know whether he was disappointed. I think he was extremely intelligent and I think he was happy with his role in the Senate. I don't think he had any second thoughts about not sponsoring any major pieces of legislation.

Q: It's interesting that someone who was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for as long as he was, never traveled outside of the country.

JH: Now that's what I was told by my father, and I can't verify that, but I certainly would

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believe what my father would tell me. But for over a decade he was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which had enormous responsibility in that position and never left the territorial limits of the country. And that's kind of a little strange situation, because in Foreign Affairs you're dealing with foreign countries, and it wasn't unusual at the time for senators and congressmen and anybody else to travel a lot in foreign countries.

Q: How do you think he pulled that off in colloquial terms?

JH: Well, I think he had enormous stature. He was intelligent. He'd been in the Senate for a long time. He was extremely articulate. He studied a lot. He had intense preparation, always, so I think he made up by his reading and studying what he didn't observe by personal visits to foreign nations. And certainly he had contacts with diplomats of all kind around the world. By sheer force of personality and intelligence, I assume that's how he retained that position and because he had a lot of seniority in the Senate.

Q: And it wasn't as if he wasn't known outside of the country?

JH: Oh no, he was known around the world.

Q: How do you think Idahoans acquired what has been described as an "uncommon pride" in Borah, despite the fact that he concentrated on foreign relations a good part, or the Constitution, some things that were not necessarily home tied, bread and butter of Idaho.

JH: Well, when I was in Washington, there were two things Idaho was known for, and we

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still are known for them in some places in Washington. One was the Idaho Potato, and the other was Senator Borah. And he had that national stature, and everybody in Idaho was proud to have somebody from Idaho who was recognized on a national and on a worldwide basis. And he was a tremendous personality. And I'm not certain, but I'm sure that he did a lot of things for Idaho in the way of appropriations and dams and things of that nature, and I don't think he neglected his state.

Q: So if he had a shortcoming it might have been that he might not have visited it as often as he should have?

JH: Well certainly in the latter several terms in the Senate, his visits to the state were quite infrequent. I think occasionally he came in the summertime and certainly when he was going to be nominated and ran for the Senate he would make an appearance, but his home was in Washington DC.

Q: He also had one in Maine, didn't he? Rolling Springs, Maine?

JH: I'm not certain about that. I'm sure he had a vacation home someplace.

Q: At the time, did Idahoans notice this that his home really was Washington?

JH: Yes, everyone was aware of that. That was one of the criticisms of him. It wasn't serious enough that the--he wasn't able to be elected time after time after time, but he was rather aloof and isolated from the state to some degree.

Q: What about, what are your thoughts about his run for the presidency? Do you think it was ill advised from that?

JH: Well, he wasn't successful, so he was probably ill advised, but he was a man of great

ambition and great ability, and Frank Church made a run for it, and Borah made a run for it.

Q: You mentioned as one of your first impressions, if not your first impression of Borah was a sense of awe that you felt. Did that change over time at all?

JH: Not really, not really. I had--of course I was a young man at the time and he had that stature as a world figure and it was quite remarkable to be sitting at the Thanksgiving table with him and listening to him discourse about various subjects including Japan, and I don't think I ever thought he had feet of clay any time.

Q: What quality about him did you admire the most?

JH: I think tenacity. I think when he believed he was right, that he voted that way, irrespective of political or other consequences, and I think that was a trait probably I most admire, other than oratory and intellectual abilities, which were obvious.

Q: Do you think the impression, the image he wanted Idahoans to have of him was any different than he wanted his colleagues or the people around the world to have of him?

JH: Well, that's kind of a hard question to answer, and I don't think he was noted for consistency, but I would think his view--his desire to have people view him would be the same whether it was an international view of him, a national view of him, or an Idaho view of him. I would think he would be consistent in that respect. I think he had enormous ambition and had an enormous self-confidence. And I don't think he would change just to suit someone.

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- Q: He didn't have a "down-home" or "western" personality that he cultivated in certain situations, which we see some politicians use?
- JH: Oh, I don't think he was one of the boys, ever, ever. I think he was, his reputation was as a loner and I don't know about any close personal friendships. I'm aware of none, so I think that reputation as a loner is accurate.
- Q: Did he come across to colleagues in Washington as an Idahoan, as a Westerner, in appearance or how did he talk? Anything like that?
- JH: Well he was extremely articulate at all times. And he pronounced his consonants and he didn't sluff words like lots of Westerners do, but I think he cultivated a western appearance, certainly wore a broad brimmed hat at all times. He had a heavy head of hair that he wore long, down to his collar and, of course, he had ever-present bow tie. And I think he looked like a Westerner and I think he cultivated an appearance as a Westerner.
- Q: When he was orating, winning people over to his side, by what he was saying, what were the keys to his success?
- JH: Well, he had a magnificent baritone voice and he was extremely articulate, albeit a bit flowery at times, but he had a sincerity that always projected and I lost track of part of that question.
- Q: How did he win people over, what were the traits that he had? Why was he so successful in his orations?
- JH: Well, he was very intelligent and he did extensive research before he gave a speech.

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My father said he wrote out his speeches in longhand and memorized his speeches, so his presentation was absolutely marvelous. And I think the sheer force of his personality, his magnetism, his intelligence and the way he projected himself gave the people the image that he wanted them to have.

Q: Was he also able to speak off the top and [?]

JH: Yes, yes he could. And of course he was a trial lawyer. He was actually a frontier lawyer and he tried many cases and was able to think and speak clearly on his feet. That was part of his training.

Q: He is also known to be fairly stubborn at times. Can you think of any examples?

JH: Well, when I was in Washington, I do recall that President Roosevelt, Franklin D., importuned him any number of times to go along with his New Deal legislation and some of it Borah went along with. But when he was opposed to a piece of legislation, generally on constitutional grounds, he was stubborn and I recall--I didn't hear him give the talk--but I recall definitely when he argued against Roosevelt's constitutional amendment to add justices to the Supreme Court that everyone called "packing the court." He gave a three-hour argument, beautifully marshalled the law and the facts and spoke without a note for all of that period time and held the attention of most of the senators.

Q: Is it fair to label him the great dissenter?

JH: Well he's been called that a time or two, and I wouldn't think that's entirely justified. I think that stems primarily from the fact that he didn't personally offer a lot of

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legislation, but he was instrumental in killing a lot of legislation. Some of it which probably shouldn't be on the books anyway. [tape turned off and on] Will you talk to her?

Q: Is that your grandfather?

JH: Yes, my grandfather--it's a four-volume work, and he wrote that for the last ten years of his life. There is three volumes and then the fourth is a volume of anecdotes. Didn't have large circulation, but there is some in the library.

Q: Let's carry on that theme, if Senator Borah were alive today and making wonderful speeches on television or someplace, what would the argument be about, or talking about?

JH: Well you know he was an extreme isolationist and an extreme nationalist all of his lifetime. He didn't believe in foreign intervention of any type or kind and today with a global economy, global politics the way it is, he would have to moderate his views, because he would be living today in the world we live in. And while I'm sure he would be opposed to police states of any kind, certainly he would have to moderate his views in that respect and realize that the United States had to live in a global economy and had to have Democratic allies. He would, I'm sure, as a practical man, he would have moderated his views. It would be a different time and a different era for him. Respecting his constitutional views, he was a strict constructionalist; that is, he believed the Constitution should be interpreted in literal terms of the Constitution, within the four corners of the Constitution. Along those lines, his views probably

would be similar to Judge Bork who was Bush's nomination to the Supreme Court that he had to withdraw. Borah would still be a strict constructionist of the Constitution and I'm satisfied with, how to his views that the Constitution should not be interpreted or bent to accommodate the social mores or views of the time.

?: I think Bork was Reagan's nominee?

JH: You're right.

?: Perhaps if we could have you just pick it up--I said Bush's, didn't I?

Q: Bush is on everyone's mind.

?: If we could just have you pick it up from "he was a strict."

JH: Respecting the Constitution, Borah was a strict constructionist of the Constitution. He believed that the Constitution should be interpreted by the literal language of the Constitution, similar to Reagan's nominee, Bork's view of the Constitution. He felt that the Constitution should not be interpreted or bent to accommodate the social mores or views of the current time.

Q: Was it these philosophies or constitutionalism, isolationism things like that drove Borah, or was there something else that was the compelling force in his life?

JH: Well, I suppose he had an inner fire, I'm certain of that and he had great ambition and it had to come within him and he had a fixed and firm belief in the political views that he espoused and the origin of those beliefs. I'm just not in a position to determine what they were.

Q: How would you describe his partisanship? He was a Republican, but was he

Republican to the core?

JH: Of course, you know, I just echo the views that I was aware of at the time and Borah was a nominal Republican. He didn't hew or adhere to the party line or parrot the party line and I'm satisfied that he had any number of liberal tendencies that caused him to vote with the Democratic party many, many times. He certainly was not a hard rock Republican.

Q: And, why was that? Was that because of his principals? Was there something he grew up with, he didn't like the infighting that goes along with partisanship.

JH: Oh, well he was a trial lawyer so he was weaned on infighting. That's just the nature of the profession, was combat. And I think he, if he believed he was right then he followed his beliefs and I don't think he cared about the fallout, or the political consequences of his actions.

Q: What do you think he liked best about Idaho?

JH: I think I mentioned to you that while he came after my grandfather, who was a frontier lawyer, Borah also was a frontier lawyer and they had fierce independence and I think--and I just have to--I just have to use my best judgment about this, my best judgment would be that his greatest fondness was for the people of Idaho and their independence and the spirit of Idaho. Of course I'm satisfied he loved the great Idaho outdoors.

Q: He did spend some time there?

JH: Yes he did.

Q: Probably not with his bow tie on?

JH: I never saw him without his bow tie.

Q: Okay, I guess, maybe one more question, do you know, he used to carry around a notebook of very special quotations. Any anecdotes about that at all that you remember?

JH: No, I really don't have any knowledge of that, but I do know that he meticulously researched and prepared his speeches and I'm certain that he had book of Bartlett's quotations among other books and probably biblical references that were scattered throughout his speeches, as all of the orators of that time.

Q: Anything else you think we should bring up about William Borah?

JH: I can't think of, I wish I knew more intimately about him, but--

Q: Peter?

P: I have a question. When you answer, answer to Barbara. The question I have, if I met Senator Borah on the train on one of his return trips, could you describe the man that I would meet on a train. What would I see and what kind of person would I meet? What was his handshake like? Could you just paint a portrait?

JH: Well I don't think you would have seen a really outgoing person that would have introduced himself to you and engaged you in a conversation. But if you were introduced to him, I'm certain that you would meet a man with a firm handshake, and he was a well-built man, and a handsome man, and I think you'd be very, very impressed with him. I don't think he would engage in any idle conversation with

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you, but I think that if he met you under appropriate circumstances, and you sat down and conversed with him, that you would find an intelligent, outgoing person.

P: Are there qualities, are there some of his qualities today that would not be part of the times? Would he be able to adapt to today's political atmosphere; appearances[?] on television, and a different political world?

JH: I think he could adapt easily to the world of politics as it is today. Certainly I think that he would be a photogenic person, and I think he wouldn't be given to an excess of flowery speech as the orators of that day and time frequently engaged in. But I think his views would have to moderate, as I've indicated before, because it is a different time--

END OF SIDE 1

SIDE 2

--and a different era, but you aren't going to moderate his views of constitutional law. They were fixed.

Q: Home schooling--

JH: You just have to speculate about that, but the right of privacy that has been extended by court decisions or the fight against the bearing arms, which is a provision of the Constitution, I don't think his view would moderate on those things at all. As far as civil right is concerned, I think--I don't know what his views would be, but I'm satisfied that equality under the law, and he respected the law, would be a conclusion of his. Respecting abortion, I don't know what he would do, although my guess

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would be pro-choice.

END OF TAPE: END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by

Audited by Mary Drury, June 8, 1993; corrections entered by Ruth Jarvis Hall, June 15, 1995.